precluded here by the clear and unmistakable policy of the bankruptcy act. It is important to bear in mind that the present case is one not within the jurisdiction of a state court, but is a dependent suit brought to vindicate decrees of a federal court of bankruptcy entered in the exercise of a jurisdiction essentially federal and exclusive in character. And it is that situation to which we address ourselves, and to which our decision is confined.

One of the primary purposes of the bankruptcy act is to "relieve the honest debtor from the weight of oppressive indebtedness and permit him to start afresh free from the obligations and responsibilities consequent upon business misfortunes." *Williams* v. *U. S. Fidelity Co.*, 236 U. S. 549, 554-555. This purpose of the act has been again and again emphasized by the courts as being of public as well as private interest, in that it gives to the honest but unfortunate debtor who surrenders for distribution the property which he owns *at the time of bankruptcy*, a new opportunity in life and a clear field for future effort, unhampered by the pressure and discouragement of preexisting debt. *Stellwagen* v. *Clum*, 245 U. S. 605, 617; *Hanover National Bank* v. *Moyses, supra; Swarts* v. *Fourth National Bank*, 117 Fed. 1, 3; *United States* v. *Hammond*, 104 Fed. 862, 863; *Barton Bros.* v. *Texas Produce Co.*, 136 Fed. 355, 357; *Hardie* v. *Swafford Bros. Dry Goods Co.*, 165 Fed. 588, 591; *Gilbert* v. *Shouse*, 61 F. (2d) 398. The various provisions of the bankruptcy act were adopted in the light of that view and are to be construed when reasonably possible in harmony with it so as to effectuate the general purpose and policy of the act. Local rules subversive of that result cannot be accepted as controlling the action of a federal court.

When a person assigns future wages, he, in effect, pledges his future earning power. The power of the individual to earn a living for himself and those dependent upon him is in the nature of a personal liberty quite as much if not more than it is a property right. To preserve its free exercise is of the utmost importance, not only because it is a fundamental private necessity, but because it is a matter of great public concern. From the viewpoint of the wage earner there is little difference between not earning at all and earning wholly for a creditor. Pauperism may be the necessary result of either. The amount of the indebtedness, or the proportion of wages assigned, may here be small, but the principle, once estab-

lished, will equally apply where both are very great. The new opportunity in life and the clear field for future effort, which it is the purpose of the bankruptcy act to afford the emancipated debtor, would be of little value to the wage earner if he were obliged to face the necessity of devoting the whole or a considerable portion of his earnings for an indefinite time in the future to the payment of indebtedness incurred prior to his bankruptcy. Confining our determination to the case in hand, and leaving prospective liens upon other forms of acquisitions to be dealt with as they may arise, we reject the Illinois decisions as to the effect of an assignment of wages earned after bankruptcy as being destructive of the purpose and spirit of the bankruptcy act.

Decree affirmed.

A true copy.

Test:

Clerk, Supreme Court, U. S.